

CHAPTER 16

1983-1987: Would Moscow Give Sakharov to Kennedy?

Reagan's "Star Wars" speech impels a return to Moscow and a halt to the FAS boycott. A secretly arranged meeting takes place with Elena Bonner, who hints at new hunger strikes. Later Sakharov writes the author in an effort to warn the world of such an act, but the Sakharov family deliberately holds up the letter. An idea is generated to have Sakharov given to Senator Kennedy, as other dissidents had been, and a two-year effort goes forward to work out a deal.

Finally, in late 1986, Sakharov is released from Gorky. In 1987 three evenings are spent with Sakharov, mainly reexamining the past.

On March 23, 1983, President Ronald Reagan gave his famous "Star Wars" speech, which we viewed as an arms race emergency threatening the ABM Treaty in which we had put such store and on which we had worked from 1963 to 1972. Our response to it, and its impact on work on SALT and START, are described later. But the speech also had important repercussions on our work with Andrei Sakharov. In particular, it forced our return to Moscow.

Shortly after the speech a Soviet journalist dropped in to get our reaction to a long list of Soviet scientists having signed an "Appeal to All Scientists of the World from Soviet Scientists" denouncing the Reagan speech. Rather than provide an offhand reaction, I proposed to Frank von Hippel, then the chairman of FAS, that we send a joint formal letter to Soviet Academy of Sciences president A. D. Alexandrov saying we shared his concern that ABM systems were a danger to world peace and that they could stir up the arms race. We did so.

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Drawing on my early experience in the debate of the 1960s, and in an effort to help Sakharov, we said, "As participants in those early debates, we well remember the early support in this struggle of such members of your Academy as the late Academician Artsimovich, of Academician Andrei Sakharov, and later of the late Academician M. D. Millionschikov."²⁹⁵ We invited Alexandrov to distribute our letter to all academy members.

We received a call from the Soviet embassy; could two officials call on us? On their arrival, they produced, with a great flourish, a return letter from President Alexandrov. It was, however, little more than a friendly acknowledgment and did not propose any joint action against the ABM.

I told the visitors that we had boycotted the Soviet Union for the last three years on the specific ground that we had been denied a visa to go to Moscow to complain about Sakharov. What if, in the face of this emergency, we made a trip to Moscow to discuss the arms race with the full understanding that we would, while there, make known our views about Sakharov? Honor having been served, I said, we could return to civilized discussions of arms control—which was, after all, the goal of our organization.

And so that is what we did.

The visit to Moscow took place in November 1983. I arranged with the American embassy to meet Elena Bonner, then visiting Moscow. She was brought to the embassy by a staffer at 11:00 A.M. on Saturday, November 26, while I, with a camera—as if at Checkpoint Charlie—waited for any interference from the Soviet guards as she "crossed the lines."

The embassy was jittery—and rightly so—about Soviet eavesdropping, and the arrangements for this visit had been discussed with me under a freezing "cone of silence" right out of a *Get Smart* episode.

We had not met before, since she had been in Europe when I visited Andrei at their dacha. But we had, of course, been in correspondence. B.J. and I had received a small gift from the Sakharovs—a

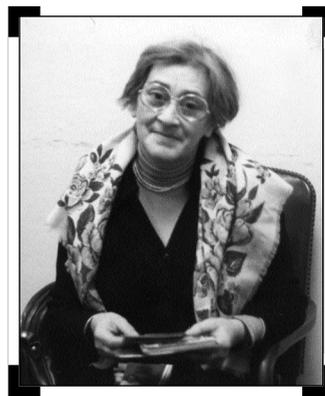
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wooden doll with their names discreetly written on the bottom—and she knew, of course, something about our work. Her eighty-year-old mother had stayed at our house in Washington; and we were quite friendly with Tanya and Efrem and had brought pictures of the family with us for her.

We gave her a camera and, more important, the most powerful handheld computer then on the market, a Texas Instruments device that could be programmed with up to six hundred instructions. It was for Sakharov, to give him something to occupy his mind.

While we spoke, Elena discussed the campaigns being waged against them. An anti-Semitic article entitled “E. Bonner and Children Incorporated” had begun as follows: “In its effort to undermine Soviet structures from within, the CIA has gone to Imperial Zionism and created a special section for 5,000 agents. . . . A. D. Sakharov has become the victim of one of the Zionist agents of the CIA [i.e., of wife Elena Bonner].” As a result of this campaign, the Sakharovs had received 2,500 abusive letters saying, for example, “Divorce this Jewish woman.”

The Sakharovs feared using the official doctors (lest they harm Elena deliberately), some of whom had lied to them or about them in judicial proceedings. And Bonner complained about lies that were being told about Sakharov’s affairs to U.S. delegations by various people—especially Soviet Nobel Prize winner N. Basov and President Alexandrov. She said that Western scientists should insist that Sakharov participate in any disarmament talks held in Moscow.^[296] She complained that an NAS group had failed to meet with her in October 1982 after applying, in advance, for such a lunch. She claimed that an embassy official had appeared, shamefaced, and reported that the Soviet authorities had threatened the U.S. National Academy of Sciences that the semiannual disarma-



Elena Bonner in a secretly arranged meeting with the author at the U.S. embassy in Moscow while Andrei Sakharov was exiled in Gorky

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ment talks with them would be broken off if they met with her. (The academy saw it quite differently.)^[297]

I explained the FAS's recent three-year rupture of relations with the Soviet embassy over its refusal to give us visas to complain about Sakharov. And I said that we had come only on the stated understanding that we could complain about the case while here this time. Still, our own talks on disarmament with Soviet scientists might be broken off. She did not thank us for this or any other of our efforts. An Amnesty International official had told me years earlier that the dissidents in Russia never do. She just looked down, smiled, and said she understood. One got the clear impression that what were strains for us were, really, victories for her. And she may well have put no store in talks about arms control and considered us, really, foolish for thinking that a dialogue on arms control with the Soviets was of any value.

In fact, Bonner thought all the visitors were out of their depth. "Foreigners," she said, "could not appreciate the force of propaganda here and, in general, the quality of totalitarian life. Every Soviet dissident was a miracle, like a bit of sand in the gears that turned out to be a diamond. The government is composed of deeply cynical people who think only of their personal position and nothing more."

The dissidents were, indeed, remarkably durable, and of course, their personalities varied all over the map. But I have never forgotten my first meeting, in New York, with the just-exiled Valery Chalidze, who had served with Sakharov in forming a Soviet-based committee on human rights. Asked politely, on his first day in America, whether he thought he would become an American citizen, he said, "I do not think so. I have read the oath of citizenship, and they would have to make certain changes."

Sakharov himself was unfazed by the strains of opposing the system. As will be seen, he was thoughtful, logical, and quite detached in dealing with problems. But he certainly did not believe in trading "chits," as politicians do.

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So one could move heaven and earth, as Jerome Wiesner did, to get Sakharov his first trip out of Russia. But that did not mean Sakharov would agree to speak to potential donors on behalf of the Sakharov Foundation that Jerry was trying to create. To say other than exactly what he thought—just because someone was helping him—would have been for Sakharov, I suppose, some kind of lapse in integrity. I wonder if he believed even in social white lies.

The main thing I learned in Moscow, which I did *not* report in the newsletter, was that the Sakharovs were thinking of announcing yet another hunger strike—only twenty-four months after the last one, which had lasted seventeen days!^[298]

Bonner gave me a letter that she wanted delivered to the Soviet Academy. Since I was at the airport, about to leave the country, I offered it to one of my hosts, Andrei Kokoshin (then the head of the military-political division of Arbatov's Institute for the USA and Canada, later the deputy defense minister, and still later the secretary of the national security council). He turned white at the very idea of accepting this letter for transmission to the academy.

A few weeks later, when Velikhov was in the United States, I showed it to him. In Elena Bonner's book *Alone Together*, she makes much of this issue of letter-delivery, saying: "We think Dr. Stone kept his promise, and that the Academy administration therefore knew about Sakharov's coming hunger strike and what had prompted it. Just like the previous time, they did nothing to avert it."²⁹⁹

In fact, this is incorrect on a number of grounds:

- A. The letter did *not* threaten a hunger strike. It did indicate that the issue had become "for us a question of life or death" but it suggested that *Elena Bonner's* life was at risk.
- B. I was not asked to pass along the hints of a hunger strike to Velikhov.
- C. On January 13 Sakharov released this letter to Andropov to the press, so the academy certainly had it by then.

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D. In general, Elena Bonner had no way of knowing that the Soviet Academy "did nothing to avert" the hunger strike. Whether the academy did, or did not, do anything to try to fulfill her desire to help Sakharov, she could only have known that it did not succeed.

Ironically, the historical record shows that it was Elena Bonner's daughter Tanya Yankelevich and her son-in-law Efrem who prevented the world in general (and the Academy of Sciences in particular) from learning that Andrei Sakharov was, indeed, definitely thinking of another hunger strike.

On January 13, 1984, when Sakharov released the letter to Andropov publicly, he sent the Yankeleviches in Boston a letter addressed to me personally that did specifically warn, "I've begun thinking of a hunger strike again, however horrible or monstrous it may sound. But is there any other way out?"^[300]

Efrem and Tanya deliberately kept this letter from me for three months, until late April. Even while visiting my Washington home for an overnight stay that spring, they advised me that they were "still translating" a letter for me from Sakharov!

When they finally sent it to me, I immediately tried to get *The Washington Post* and the Associated Press, among others, to cover this. But a three-month-old warning of a hunger strike that clearly had not occurred was not considered newsworthy. When, finally, a reporter for *Science* magazine agreed to write about it, he called Efrem for comments and was promptly persuaded by Efrem *not* to publish. So the Yankeleviches seemed still to be hoping that the hunger strike—designed to secure an exit visa for their mother—might not occur. Or they were afraid that Elena's contingency planning in Moscow by Elena might be upset if this possibility became known.

Withal, the hunger strike began on May 2. The first newspaper reports were on May 9, with *The New York Times* reporting that Sakharov had said he would "fast to the very end if they do not let her go abroad for medical treatment."

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By coincidence, Velikhov was in America from about May 4 through May 12, and so he was present when the storm broke. I escorted him in Washington, where Ivan Selin, the chairman of the board of American Management Systems (AMS) gave a party for him on May 6 and where he met with NAS and Les Aspin on May 8. I also took him to Boston, where he attended a gala birthday party for the physicist Victor Weisskopf and then left for Russia on May 14.

By May 20 we were cabling Velikhov, then the vice president of the Academy of Sciences, warning of the effects Sakharov's death would have—we stated that “the entire [presidential] election will be influenced by this tragedy, and in an undesirable direction.”

An enormous worldwide campaign was under way. On May 24 Tanya Yankelevich met with Pope John Paul II and reported, “He promised us his full support.”³⁰¹ The science academies of four major countries (the United States, Great Britain, France, and Sweden) urged the Soviet Academy to “help Academician Sakharov and his wife in getting the health care they require and request.”³⁰² The Norwegian Nobel Committee wrote on May 25, expressing “concern and dismay.” Editorials were everywhere.

On May 26 we cabled Sakharov to remind him of all the dire consequences that would attend his death and added, “Please keep this in mind when you consider, for example, whether Western medical attention and visits with Western relatives must take place now and in the future outside the Soviet Union, or could take place inside.”³⁰³

On May 28 we cabled Velikhov that “the quiet presence of an FAS official in Moscow might be useful perhaps in providing assurances” and that “Larry [Larry Horowitz in Senator Kennedy's office] and his office agree” and that, if the academy agrees, would invite us and provide visa support.³⁰⁴

That got nowhere, and at the end of March, I went to a Pugwash conference in Geneva. At the conference I tried something else. I wrote a telegram addressed to President Chernenko but sent it to Velikhov, asking him “if possible and useful” to transmit this not

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only to Chernenko but also, with copies, to the foreign minister and to Ponomarev, the Communist Party secretary of ideology. It said, “If the Soviet government is unable to persuade Sakharov to end the hunger strike, we respectfully request the opportunity to try to do so using our established close relationship with him to accomplish this goal.”

I also asked for visa support to get into Moscow. This apparently hit a real nerve—certainly because of the highly ranked persons we listed as desired recipients of the letter. Our request elicited an angry letter from the Soviet Academy’s chief learned secretary, A. S. Khohlov, to FAS’s chairman, Frank von Hippel:

J. Stone’s addressing to the Academy of Sciences of the USSR by telex of May 31, we regard as interference in our internal affairs. Such actions of J. Stone can complicate to a great extent relations between us and undermine bases of mutual understanding established between Academy of Sciences, USSR and FAS. Due to this reason we are unable to arrange acceptance of J. Stone’s visit to Moscow and in future we shall refrain from meeting with him on such matters.

By June 5 the Russians were denying that Sakharov had died, and the Soviet press agency Tass was saying that he “feels well, takes regular meals and leads an active way of life.”³⁰⁵ No one knew anything and, in particular, no one could confirm whether or not Elena had joined in the fast.

By June 7 Efrem and Tanya were at the economic summit in London, trying to meet with aides to the seven leaders, and the U.S. State Department spokesman said that the United States had been in “quiet diplomacy” with Moscow on this issue for “several months.”³⁰⁶

The Russians were angry, and an irritated Foreign Minister Gromyko was saying that Moscow “will not be told how to deal with the Sakharovs by other countries. The conversation on this subject ends here.”³⁰⁷

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In November 1983 after Elena Bonner hinted at a new hunger strike, I began working on a way in which Sakharov and Bonner might be expelled from the Soviet Union and sent to the West. It seemed feasible in principle. Officials in Moscow were split on a course of action. We knew that some Soviet officials thought that he knew too many secrets ever to be allowed to leave the country. Some were even saying that he was so brilliant that “he still might invent something against us.”^[308] But others thought that fifteen years without a security clearance and thirty years away from real weapons work were quite enough to permit his exit.

Thanks to a chance meeting with a Kennedy staffer, Jan Kalicki, at a Midwest arms control meeting right before my 1983 trip to Moscow, I had been authorized to invite Velikhov to a December 7 forum on nuclear winter that Kennedy was organizing. ¶ Neither of us thought he would come on such short notice, but he did.

Kennedy threw a wonderful party for Velikhov and his delegation and gave him a number of presents, including a bust of Einstein.^[309] I was Velikhov’s host during the visit and took the delegation to Princeton and Boston from December 6 to December 12.

In Princeton, while discussing gifts, I had a brainstorm. Maybe the Politburo would “give Sakharov away” as a gift. And to whom better than Senator Kennedy! They were eager for him to visit Moscow. Kennedy had been instrumental in springing other dissidents in just this way by negotiating terms for a Kennedy visit to Moscow.³¹⁰ And Moscow could, perhaps, elect Senator Kennedy president with such a gift—or think they could.

I pursued this idea for the next three years as it moved up and down and up and down. In the process, I learned that Senator Kennedy had a potentially useful back channel of his own. Eventually I became a link between Mrs. Bonner, during her visit to the United States, and Senator Kennedy. But even the Bonner family had to be kept in the dark about some sensitive matters at that juncture.

FAS had arranged to have a traveling school on arms control in which Velikhov and we would host each other’s delegations and

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hear lectures on arms control. We were scheduled to go to the USSR in late March, two weeks after the death of President Chernenko (March 10, 1985). I asked Senator Kennedy's office to send Larry Horowitz or a letter with me. Kennedy wrote this note, which I delivered:

Dear Mr. Vice President:

I regret that important U.S. Senate meetings prevented me from sending Larry Horowitz to Moscow with the Jeremy Stone delegation. I asked Jeremy to deliver this letter to you in order to convey my warmest greetings and to convey my concerns on a matter of mutual interest.

As you know, the issue of Andrei Sakharov has complicated U.S.-Soviet relations. Now, according to press reports this week, he has threatened to resign from your Academy—an action which would provide a new obstacle to the improvement of these relations. Recognizing that this is viewed as an internal issue by your government, I did nonetheless want to express my readiness to participate, if asked to do so, in any solution to the problem.

As you know, I have been thinking about a visit to the Soviet Union. If it were helpful to the constructive solution of the problem I would alter my schedule to make myself available at any time.

I look forward to seeing you again soon, either here or in Moscow.

My very best personal regards,

Sincerely,

Edward M. Kennedy

I had also had a brainstorm about how to urge Sakharov's release from Gorky. While sitting next to Velikhov at a lunch on April 1, I quietly advised him that the greatest enemy of Star Wars was, in fact, in the Soviet Union. He asked, "Who?" I pulled out Sakharov's comments on the ABM from his 1968 book *Progress, Coexistence, and Intellectual Freedom*. "If you permit him to speak," I advised, "he would be a terrific asset to the anti-ABM campaign." I gave him and Arbatov

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copies of the remarks, and I advised both of them that these statements would be printed in our *Public Interest Report*.³¹¹ (In retrospect, however, it is obvious that the pre-Gorbachev Politburo was too hidebound ideologically to consider such a tradeoff.)

On April 4 in Moscow, Sergei Kapitza took me to lunch with his mother, the widow of the famous atomic scientist Peter Kapitza, whom I had met in Finland. A very brave man, Kapitza had offended Beria by declining to work on atomic weapons (not for political or moral reasons, however). As a consequence, she and he had lived under conditions approaching house arrest for a dozen years, until Beria died. During this time they left the house only together, lest one of them be killed by the KGB.

She also gave me some insight into Mrs. Bonner's power over Andrei—which is, of course, confirmed in almost every chapter of Sakharov's *Memoirs*.³¹² She said that once, Peter Kapitza—who was senior to Sakharov and respected by him—asked, in the presence of Elena, if he could speak to Andrei alone. Elena did not offer to step out of the room, and so Andrei refused. Mrs. Kapitza said that all of the wives in her circle hated Elena Bonner.

After this visit to Moscow, which was my main chance to influence the START talks (to be discussed later), I returned to Washington at the same time as Velikhov. On April 8, after a lunch we and a few others had with Senator Kennedy in my home, I observed to Velikhov that no one was “using” the fact that Sakharov had “integrity”—he would do whatever he said with regard to staying in the West or telling secrets. Why not ask him what he would do? The problem, Velikhov said, was his wife. I replied that in Gorky the wife was “very powerful because he had no other influences, but in



*Academician Evgeny Velikhov and
Senator Ted Kennedy at lunch*

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America there would be other people to talk to." He thought this was "very interesting," and I mentioned the Star Wars angle again.^[313]

On the same day, Sakharov began his hunger strike again, to demand that Elena "be allowed to go abroad to visit her mother, children, and grandchildren and to receive medical treatment." He was removed to the hospital and force-fed and ended his strike on July 11—only to begin it again on July 25 so as to be back in the hospital by August 1, the tenth anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act embodying the human rights for which he was fighting.³¹⁴

Sakharov was so intent on getting Elena permission for this trip that he offered to both President Gorbachev (who had become president on July 2) and Gromyko to "discontinue my public activities apart from exceptional circumstances."³¹⁵ By August 13 he had dropped from 175 pounds to 138. He discontinued the strike only on October 23, when Elena was assured she would get a visa the next day.

The hunger strike had lasted, with one two-week break, for six months!

On April 17 Larry reported that Velikhov said he was interested in the Kennedy idea but would need certain assurances and would meet with the secretary general, in person and in private, at the end of April, to try to deal with the problem in May. Larry said he might be making an "advance trip" to Gorky.

On April 18, I sent Velikhov a telegram with a prearranged signal that Kennedy's office was moving forward with the gift approach of releasing Sakharov as a goodwill gesture.

I now gave Larry a letter for Sakharov dated May 7; in it I explained what we were up to and what we felt Sakharov would have to do—in case Larry made enough progress so that Sakharov himself became the obstacle. I appealed to Sakharov to agree not to campaign against the Soviets if they would release him to the West. I wrote:

[I]t was my view that the solution to your confinement required some kind of concession as well as the intercession of the Senator. Accord-

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ingly, I urged Soviet authorities to use the principled character of your mind as a solution to the very problems it created for them. We all understood that you could be depended upon to hold to any agreements reached. Thus your character is, again, determining your fate.

Needless to say, it was already understood on both sides that you were, despite all, patriotic, had never revealed Soviet secrets before, and would not do so in future. But there were fears of a rapid intense round of denunciation—fears exaggerated by the exaggerations of Soviet propaganda about you which many Soviet officials had come to believe.

I went on to describe the costs to arms control of his hunger strikes and the urgency of resolving them; I also explained the impossibility of consulting Efrem and Tanya, but I expressed my feeling that they would agree. I further opined that if this did not work out, Mrs. Bonner would want to return to the Soviet Union—which would be foolish.

Finally, I pointed out that this proposal had “taken one year and a half to mature and the election of a new secretary-general. We will not have a chance like this soon again.”

Larry’s trip to Moscow was unfortunately postponed, as shown by the fact that my files show the same letter, retyped with the date July 11 as I redated it to give it to him again. For the five months, from June to October 1985, Larry kept up a lively back-channel communication with his interlocutors in Moscow, frequently giving me cryptic indications about Sakharov’s well-being.^[316]

On July 23 I was given to understand that the Russians had made a major offer to Senator Kennedy to visit Moscow, upon which all this scheming had depended—but that it did not include anything for Sakharov. It did include, I was told, five hours with Gorbachev, being on television twice, addressing the Supreme Soviet, and something about parliamentary exchange.

Kennedy turned it down. We were still in business!

On September 9 Sakharov’s stepson, Alexsei Semyonov, called on the White House and on September 12 began a hunger strike in front

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of the Soviet embassy (or as close as they permit). The very same day Larry told me that "Soviets cable urgent meeting Vienna."

I considered this the direct result of Soviet nervousness about Alexsei's hunger strike. When I visited him on the street corner—with Tanya saying, "Jeremy, don't discourage him"—I felt very strange. Alexsei's hunger strike was stimulating alarm in Moscow and I could feel the pulse of that alarm directly through Larry's cables. I couldn't encourage him without revealing what was up. And, in any case, I was not at all sure what was the right thing to encourage.

Then Moscow said a week later would be all right. On September 16 they proposed stepping back the urgent meeting to September 27 in Helsinki, and Larry cabled back something on the order of "cut the baloney." More time passed, and on October 16 Larry told me that Gorbachev had said "no for the foreseeable future"; the foreign minister was annoyed at Shultz over something that had happened in Helsinki!

Given all this, it was a surprise when, on October 23, Elena Bonner got her visa and thereafter was permitted to go abroad. What had happened?

Dobrynin's memoirs show that the Politburo had discussed Bonner's request on August 29, 1985. The chairman of the KGB, Viktor Chebrikov, spoke in favor of granting the application but "categorically opposed permitting Sakharov to accompany her because of his knowledge of the development of Soviet nuclear weapons in minute detail. If Sakharov got a laboratory abroad, he would be able to go on with military research."³¹⁷ But the issue of Sakharov's release from Gorky persisted.

At the invitation of the Supreme Soviet, Kennedy decided to go to Moscow to meet Gorbachev and to see what he could do. A few days before he left, I passed through Boston on my return trip from China, and on January 29, 1986, I called on Mrs. Bonner at 54 Maplewood Avenue, where Tanya and Efrem lived.

She was quite willing to have the campaign directed toward

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Sakharov returning to Moscow, as opposed to leaving the USSR, and she was willing to make a deal in which both would cease commenting on issues that enraged the Politburo. She thought the Soviet official who would be most likely to be able to negotiate this with Andrei was Velikhov.

I told Kennedy that Bonner was not aware of the “enormous and unique influence” the senator had in the Soviet Union but that after I explained it, “the family began to realize it and warmed up to your involvement and, in particular, made it clear that they would not attack you.” (At this Kennedy looked astonished at the temerity of Mrs. Sakharov.)

The Bonner family also mentioned that they had a document whose release would embarrass the president of the Soviet Academy; they suggested that Gorbachev be advised to make concessions to “distance himself from the past brutalities” that they were prepared to disclose. (This document was Andrei’s letter to the president of the academy describing his hunger strike of 1984.)

Elena Bonner had returned to Gorky in June, after meeting with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, President François Mitterrand, and Premier Jacques Chirac—all of whom were urged to work for Sakharov’s return to Moscow and not for emigration.³¹⁸ Four months later, on October 23, 1986, Sakharov wrote Gorbachev a letter in which he stated his position and promised that he would “make no more public statements, apart from exceptional cases when, in the words of Tolstoy, ‘I cannot remain silent.’”³¹⁹ Gorbachev called him in response on December 16, saying, “I received your letter. We’ve reviewed it and discussed it. You can return to Moscow. The Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet will be rescinded. A decision has also been made about Elena Bonnaire [*sic*].”³²⁰

Sakharov himself was never sure that his letter did the trick. In his *Memoirs*, he said, “I have no way of knowing whether it was this letter that prompted our release, although I suspect it was not. I’ve heard rumors that our case was under discussion during the summer of 1986 or even earlier; it’s just possible, however, that the letter

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was the imperceptible tremor that touched off the avalanche." Just like us butterflies, for causation, Sakharov's theory had, in the end, to fall back upon chaos theory.

In February 1987, on the occasion of a Moscow Forum, B.J. and I passed three long evenings at the Sakharovs' home. Elena was angry. I had refused the Sakharov family's request to falsely assert that Efrem was needed by me for translation purposes so that he could "break the ice" and get a visa for a return visit to Russia.^[321] "We will never forgive you," she said. Even the mild-mannered Andrei wanted an explanation.

But I was ready for this with the only kind of explanation that Andrei Sakharov could accept—a *principled* answer. We said we had always responded when his health and safety were at risk, even when that was the result of actions he had taken for his family. But otherwise, we could not be involved in family affairs and would put our arms control work first. (The FAS chairman, Matthew Meselson, had suggested I tell Andrei that he would resign if I did not take this position.) Andrei pondered this calmly, as I knew he would, and then turned to other matters.

We discussed all of the human rights issues that had swirled around him over the preceding twenty years, including how his warning of his hunger strike came to be published in *The New York Times* two weeks after it had begun, through no fault of mine but because of his family's actions. He smiled and quoted Antoine Bolulay De La Meurthe: "It was worse than a crime, it was a blunder." But he noted that Efrem made fewer mistakes than did Talleyrand.³²²

Sakharov seemed quite well, although I could not help feeling that the hunger strikes had taken a terrible toll. He had recently been quoted in *Pravda*—an important sign of his evolving acceptance—and he seemed destined to continue to play many important roles: loyal opposition leader inside the Soviet Union, creative and constructive critic in arms control negotiations, and human rights watchdog for all those in trouble.

He died two years later, on December 14, 1989, at the age of sixty-

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eight. It was the same month in which he had completed work on his *Memoirs*. It is ironic that it was not his complaints about the human rights of named or unnamed political prisoners or refuseniks that aroused the public, but rather his more personal and pedestrian demands for more foreign medical care and the right of his wife to travel to visit family. It was not so much the selfless quality of Sakharov's personality that caught the world's imagination as it was his determination to support his family, the ones he loved.

Had Sakharov gone on hunger strikes for other political prisoners and not for his family, his campaigns would have been neither sustainable nor sufficiently dramatic. There were too many political prisoners. There was only one wife and one family. The Soviet machine could be defeated only on the narrowest possible front.

Bonner and Sakharov, in their own way, were butterflies flapping their wings in far-off Gorky. The gigantic human rights storm they generated reduced the temperature of détente throughout the Northern Hemisphere for a decade. As an arms control advocate, I favored détente, but I was captured by the personal and moral drama of Sakharov's life, and I was honored to follow his courageous lead and to be involved in the maneuvers related above.

I am not sure how I could have done more for Sakharov—considering my base of action and political capital. After all, even Dobrynin was helpless. He wrote:

Our embassy nevertheless regularly warned Moscow about the extremely negative effect the trials of Soviet dissidents were having on American public opinion and on Soviet-American relations, but Moscow ignored it all. Brezhnev's regime remained convinced that the Western campaign for the dissidents was a matter of ideological warfare aimed at undermining Soviet society. Personal anger against Reagan was an additional factor in their stubbornness.³²³

But whatever ingenuity I, and others, applied to help Sakharov was evoked by his determination. And when we faltered, as I did

“EVERY MAN SHOULD TRY”

more than once, worrying that his strategy might fail, he refused to be discouraged and forced us to continue. He was a general fighting well in front of his troops and rallying them by example.

His intellectual motivation was rooted in the international rights of mankind. That his visceral motivation in all but one hunger strike stemmed from a highly personal love of wife and family is, perhaps, as irrelevant as sincerity is irrelevant to political acts. No one in my lifetime so deserved the Nobel Peace Prize.